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Aaron Thomas Bliss Memorial

By the Michigan Legislature

1907

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FROM

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AARON THOMAS BLISS

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[illegible]

[illegible]

His Life and Public [illegible]

and

A Biographical [illegible]

Published by Authority of the Legislature

of 1907-8

Memorial of

Aaron Thomas Bliss

Governor of Michigan

During the Years 1901-02 and 1903-04

Michigan - Legislature. (1907.)

His Life and Public Services

and

A Biographical Sketch

Published by Authority of the Legislature

of 1907-8

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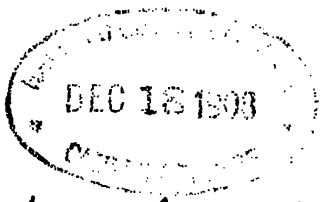

Michigan State Library.

Aaron Thomas Bliss

Aaron Thomas Bliss

Born May 22, 1837, in Smithfield, Madison County, New York.

Enlisted, as a volunteer in Company D, Tenth New York Cavalry, October 11, 1861, sergeant; later commissioned first lieutenant; captain, 1862; in service three years and five months, six months of which were passed in captivity as a prisoner of war.

Senator, 25th district, Saginaw county, 1883-84.

Member, Board of Managers of the Michigan Soldiers' Home, 1885–89.

Representative in 51st Congress, eighth district, 1889–90.

Department commander, Michigan, Grand Army of the Republic, 1897.

Governor of Michigan, 1901, 02, 03, 04.

Died, September 16, 1906.

Action of the Legislature of 1907

Lansing, January 21, 1907. In the Senate.

Mr. Fyfe offered the following resolution, which was adopted:

Resolved by the Senate (the House concurring), That a committee of three Senators be appointed to confer with a like committee to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, to arrange for a joint memorial service to be held in the hall of the House of Representatives, in memory of the late Ex-Governor Aaron T. Bliss; the joint committee to arrange the program of exercises and fix the date for said memorial services.

Lansing, January 22, 1907. In the House of Representatives.

The House concurred in the adoption of the resolution.

The President of the Senate appointed Senators Fyfe, Whitney and Carton members of a select committee to arrange for the Bliss Memorial service.

The Speaker of the House of Representatives appointed Representatives Greusel, Hudson, and C. H. Waters members of a select committee to arrange for the Bliss Memorial service.

Lansing, April 17, 1907. In the House of Representatives.

The select Committee, appointed on the part of the House under Senate resolution No. 34, by Mr. Greusel, Chairman, made the following report:

The select committee of the Senate and House of Representatives, appointed to arrange a program of exercises in memory of the late ex-Governor Aaron T. Bliss, make the following recommendation:

That the Senate and House of Representatives convene in joint session in the Hall of Representatives on Wednesday, April 24, 1907, at 2:10 p. m., and that the memorial exercises be made a special order for that day.

The committee further report that Rev. Luther Ellsworth Lovejoy, D. D., of Saginaw, will deliver an invocation, and that Hon. Washington Gardner, Rev. August F. Bruske, D. D., president of Alma College, Hon. Arthur Hill, former Governor John T. Rich, Governor Fred. M. Warner, Hon. Charles Smith, Hon. M. H. Moriarty and Hon. O. B. Fuller will take part in the exercises.

The state officers, the justices of the Supreme Court, the officers of the Military Department of the G. A. R., and of the Spanish War veterans, will be invited to attend. Cards of invitation will be furnished the members of the two houses severally for distribution.

A detailed program of exercises is in preparation and will be in readiness on the day appointed for the memorial.

The report was accepted and adopted.

Lansing, April, 24, 1907. In the House of Representatives.

The Speaker announced the arrival of the hour for the Memorial Exercises in honor of Former Governor Aaron T. Bliss.

The Speaker appointed Representatives J. H. Monroe,

Harris and Woodruff a committee to notify the Senate that the House was ready to meet in joint convention.

The Lieutenant Governor and members of the Senate were admitted and conducted to seats in the Hall of Representatives.

Joint Memorial Exercises

Joint Convention of the Two Houses

The joint convention was called to order by the Hon. Patrick H. Kelley, President of the Senate.

It was announced that a quorum was present.

Representatives Edwards and Speer and Senator MacKay were appointed a committee to wait on the Governor and staff, and invite them to be present at the joint convention.

Senator Kinnane and Representatives Bunting and Standart were appointed to wait on the Justices of the Supreme Court and invite them to be present.

Representatives L'Esperance and Farmer and Senator Kline were appointed to wait on the several state officers and invite their presence.

The Governor and his Staff, the Justices of the Supreme Court, the several state officers, and heads of the several departments and bureaus of the state government and a concourse of citizens, filling to its capacity the spacious Hall of Representatives, being in attendance;

The Rev. Luther Ellsworth Lovejoy, D. D., Pastor of the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Saginaw, offered prayer.

A double quartette from the School for the Blind at Lansing, rendered affectingly the noble hymn, "Lead, Kindly Light." A special significance attached itself to the music of these pupils of the School for the Blind on account of the successful efforts of Governor Bliss for the establishment at Saginaw of an institution where the blind are taught

and employed at various remunerative employments, thus providing them with a measure of independence otherwise impossible to many persons in their condition.

The following communication received by Mr. Greusel of the joint committee was read:

Detroit, Mich., April 23, 1907.

Hon. Joseph Greusel,
Lansing, Michigan.

My dear Sir:—

Your esteemed favor of the 18th duly received, also formal invitation to attend the memorial exercises of ex-Governor Bliss. I had made my plans to be present, but at the last moment find that circumstances beyond my control will prevent my doing so. I regret to lose the opportunity of being present on this occasion to listen to and take part in these proceedings in memory of our distinguished friend. I am the only living ex-Governor and regret that the former Governors of Michigan should fail of representation on this memorable occasion. I also desire to show my personal respect and appreciation of the man and his life work. However, old tried and true friends of Governor Bliss will do this more exhaustively and eloquently than I could possibly do and I must be content to send my sincere regrets.

Very respectfully yours,

JOHN T. RICH.

Senator Fyfe, on behalf of the joint committee, offered the following resolution:

Resolved, That the Legislature of the state of Michigan expresses its profound sorrow on account of the death of Honorable Aaron T. Bliss, ex-Governor of Michigan, at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on the sixteenth day of September, A. D. 1906.

Resolved, That as a mark of respect to the memory of the deceased, the business of the Senate and House of Representatives, in joint convention assembled, be now suspended to enable those associated with him in his civil, military and public career, to pay proper tribute to his high character and distinguished services; and be it further

Resolved, That as a further mark of respect to the memory of the deceased, the joint convention, at the conclusion of the exercises of this day, shall stand adjourned: and

Resolved further, That as a mark of the approval by the people of the state, of the life and character of Aaron T. Bliss, and their devotion to his memory, as well as an expression of their sympathy in their great bereavement, a copy of these resolutions, suitably engrossed, be prepared and transmitted to the family of the deceased.

The question being on the adoption of the resolution,

Governor Fred M. Warner, Congressman Washington Gardner, Senators Oramel B. Fuller, Charles Smith and Michael H. Moriarty, Hon. Arthur Hill and Rev. August F. Bruske, President of Alma College, addressed the joint convention.

The resolution was then unanimously adopted.

On motion of Senator Fyfe, the joint convention adjourned, the time being 4:30 o'clock p. m.

The exercises were arranged by the joint select committee:

Senate.

Andrew Fyfe, Grand Rapids.
Joseph H. Whitney, Merrill.
Augustus C. Carton, East Tawas.

House.

Joseph Greusel, Detroit.
Grant M. Hudson, Schoolcraft.
Charles H. Waters, Saginaw.

The exercises were in accordance with the following:

Programme

Invocation — Rev. Luther Lovejoy, D. D.
Pastor First M. E. Church Saginaw, W. S.

Double Quartette, "Lead, Kindly Light"
School for the Blind

Opening Remarks — Hon. P. H. Kelley
Lieutenant Governor of Michigan

Resolutions — Hon. Andrew Fyfe
Chairman Joint Committee

Arion Quartette, Saginaw, Michigan
"Nearer, My God to Thee"

Address — Hon. Fred M. Warner
Governor of Michigan

Address — Hon. Oramel B. Fuller
Acting Lieutenant Governor under Ex-Gov. Bliss

Solo, "Abide with Me" (Smith) — Mrs. James Sheldon

Address — Hon. Washington Gardner
Member of Congress, Third District, Michigan

Address — Rev. August F. Bruske, D. D.
President of Alma College

Arion Quartette, Saginaw — "Coming Down the Valley"

Address — Hon. Arthur Hill
Saginaw, Michigan

Address — Hon. Charles Smith
State Senator, Thirty-Second District, Michigan

Address — Hon. Michael H. Moriarty
State Senator, Thirty-First District, Michigan

Chorus, "The Lord is Great" — School for the Blind

Lieutenant Governor Patrick H. Kelley

Lieutenant Governor Patrick H. Kelley

This service here to-day is not intended as the service of individuals. We are not here acting for ourselves. We have come here on behalf of the state of Michigan to speak a word concerning the life and public service of former Gov. Bliss, and to assure those near of kin whom he has left behind of the kindly sympathy of the people of our state and his.

It is not our purpose here to-day to say that Gov. Bliss, in the administration of the high offices to which he had been called by the people made no mistakes—for who is there who makes no mistakes?

It can always be said, however, for former Gov. Bliss, that his moral character and business ability, his remarkable progress from obscurity to power in public and private life, his loyalty to a friend, his faithfulness to a promise, his sympathy for the weak and those in distress, his love for his home and family, for his state and for his country insure for him a permanent place in the history of this commonwealth.

Governor Fred W. Warner

Governor Fred M. Warner

The one whose memory we honor to-day was of that type who, born amid humble surroundings and denied the ordinary opportunities for education and development in their earlier years, nevertheless, through sheer native energy and persistence, press manfully onward until they make for themselves places of honor and distinction among their fellows.

The early life of Aaron T. Bliss was fraught with many hardships. Born on a rugged New York State farm, his parents were not able to permit him to enjoy to the full even the meagre educational advantages afforded by the rural school system of that early day. His services, as soon as he was able to perform any manual labor, were needed on the farm. Here he labored faithfully, attending the nearby country school at such times as he could be spared from the farm, contributing of his brawn to the support of a large family of brothers and sisters and otherwise manifesting his love for his parents and his regard for their commands. Forced by circumstances to leave home at an early age he found himself when seventeen years old thrown entirely upon his own resources. Thenceforward he carved his own way to success and fortune, depending wholly upon himself and guided alone by his own judgment.

The breaking out of the war of the rebellion found him clerking in a village store. The President's call to arms brought from him an early response. Enlisting as a private,

he was soon promoted to a lieutenancy and was finally given a captain's commission for gallant conduct on the field of battle. Captured at the close of a fiercely fought rear-guard action he suffered for six months as a prisoner of war in the prison pens at Salsbury, Andersonville, Macon, Charleston and Columbia. What horrors he endured during this long confinement no tongue can tell. In common with his fellow prisoners he suffered every indignity hostile human ingenuity could devise, yet with them he remained ever loyal to his country and his flag, casting a black bean for Abraham Lincoln in the face of threats that this action meant prolonged imprisonment and increased hardships.

Finally the opportunity long sought presented itself and he made his escape from Columbia prison only to wander, beset with the gravest perils and constantly facing starvation for eighteen weary days and nights before reaching the Union lines and safety.

No soldier of the rebellion had a better record than Aaron T. Bliss and it was due to that same tireless energy and faithfulness to duty that characterized his conduct in all the walks of life.

After giving nearly four years of his life to the service of his country, he came to Michigan and took up the duties and responsibilities of civil life. Here again his energy and strict attention to the task in hand made for success and he forged steadily forward in the business world until he occupied a commanding position therein. Constantly enlarging the field of his activities, he came to be identified with many of the enterprises which had so much to do with the development and beautification of the Saginaw Valley. Throughout this important section of our grand state he left his imprint which years will not efface.

Early in life he was called upon by his fellow citizens to represent them in public office, and he served his home city as alderman, supervisor and member of the board of education. Later he was a senator in the legislature of his state, being subsequently advanced to a place in the council halls of the nation.

In the meantime those who had stood by his side on the battle fields of the civil war and shared with him the horrors of southern prisons manifested their love and respect for him by making him Commander-in-Chief of the Michigan Department of the Grand Army of the Republic, a position than which there can be none more honorable.

Finally called to the chief magistracy of a great state, this modest, unassuming, faithful servant of the people gave his undivided attention to his new duites and, as in all other positions of trust, gave to the discharge of these duties his best and most conscientious judgment. To say that he made no errors would be to assert that he was more than human, but justice demands that it be said that such errors as he made were on the side of mercy, uninfluenced by all else than the frailties of human judgment. He was an honest man and honesty of purpose characterized his actions in public life and private station.

The home life of our departed friend was perfect. All who were privileged to know of it were charmed by its purity and simplicity. His benefactions were manifold and unostentatious. Throughout the city of his home and the state he loved there are scattered substantial evidences of his goodness of heart and love for his fellowmen that will serve to keep his memory green for generations yet to come.

It is well that the representatives of the people of the state he faithfully served in many capacities should pause in their

deliberations for the welfare of the state to do honor to his memory and thus instill in the minds of the rising generation a lesson of patriotism and devotion to duty that will make for better citizenship and better government.

Hon. Oramel B. Fuller

Hon. Oramel B. Fuller, of Ford River

ACTING LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR DURING PART OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF GOV. BLISS.

I had the honor and also the pleasure of serving in both sessions of the legislature during the administration of Governor Bliss, and I came to know him intimately and well and I always found him to be actuated by a high regard for the welfare of the state. His was a kind and friendly nature, and when in the course of his duty he could not comply with the wishes or grant the requests of a friend, he was greatly grieved. Governor Bliss had his enemies, most of us have, and the man who does not make enemies, cannot make friends. Governor Bliss typified the highest ideal of American citizenship, a patriot, loyal to his country and his flag. He was one of those who in the darkest days of our country's history volunteered for her defence, and losing sight of self he went forth to fight his country's battles for love of country and for the right, and after the war was over when the grand army was mustered out, he took his place in the ranks of those who have by their efforts and achievements advanced our state to the proud position she now holds among our sister states. It was efforts such as these that has made our country the foremost nation in the world.

As an index to the character of Governor Bliss and his love for his fellowmen, it is related that when his company of which he was captain was captured and the known horrors of Andersonville was before him, he tore off his shoulder

straps and all insignia of his rank so as to share the hardship of his men, though it was known that commissioned officers received better treatment from their Confederate captors. He did not stay in Andersonville very long as a sergeant of his company informed a Confederate officer that their captain was with them and Captain Bliss was transferred to Macon. Governor Bliss may be the last governor of Michigan who saw service in the civil war and it is a melancholy fact to contemplate that all of the actors of those stirring events will soon leave us and be called upon to pass in review before the Grand Commander of all armies and when that sad time shall come and "Taps" have been sounded over the last of our brave defenders, then the people will realize that they did not appreciate them and their services when they should have done so. Michigan has not kept pace with her sister states in honoring her heroes. Governor Bliss served his city and state in the various positions of honor and trust to which he had been called, faithfully and well, and his life will be an inspiration to young American manhood.

Congressman Washington Gardner

Congressman Washington Gardner, of Albion

For the second time within the current month the representatives of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of the state government assemble to do honor to a deceased governor of the commonwealth. A singular fatality has attended the men whom, in the past, the state has most honored and entrusted with public responsibility.

Of those who have preceded the present occupant of the executive chair, John T. Rich alone survives. Thomas W. Palmer is the sole living representative of those who have retired from the senate of the United States after a full term, or more, of service therein. A like mortality is seen among the jurists who have occupied places upon our supreme bench, Allen B. Morse being the only one living, not now in active service, who was elected to the state's highest legal tribunal.

When it is recalled that with rare exceptions the conspicuous of one generation are unremembered by the next; when in the quiet hour we reflect that men in public life are often belittled and their faults magnified, their motives questioned and traduced, their faithful and conscientious efforts to serve the people unappreciated and misrepresented, their private lives exposed to the morbid gaze and the inuendoes of an unfriendly public and even the sanctity of the domestic relations invaded and made to do service if their publicity will help or hinder the political ambitions of persons or parties; when, as is often the case, private welfare must be made sub-

servient to the public good and opportunities to obtain a competency must of necessity be passed unimproved, we are led to ask, what are the compensations commensurate with the interests imperilled? Is it for reputation and possible fame? Then all is "vanity and vexation of spirit." Is it to sip from the delicious nectar of public applause? Then every cup is mingled with wormwood and gall. If the gratification of personal ambition, the pleasures or the emoluments of office, or the fleeting reputation attained were all or the chief results, most men, with knowledge gained by experience, would declare that public life does not pay.

When, however, we call to mind that government as constituted in these United States, and in most of the several states, is the best civic expression of the civilization of the centuries; that it is what it is because of the blood and the tears, the woe and the death, the labor and the sacrifice of the generations that have preceded us, and that its care is a sacred legacy, and its preservation and betterment a solemn duty entrusted to the generation to which we belong, then public service whether municipal, state, or national, whether legislative, judicial, or executive imposes obligations which cannot be honorably or safely ignored or put aside.

Constitutions, statutes, and institutions have been constructed, enacted, and built up largely by those entrusted with place and power. What though the builders are forgotten, if that for which they toiled remains, and that which they builded endures to benefit and bless mankind. An honorable even though an inconspicuous part in the constructive forces that make for a higher and a better civilization is no mean service and is the faithful public servant's chief compensation—his enduring memorial.

The people of Michigan are forever obligated to the men around whom and through whom have grown up and developed those distinctive features which have given our commonwealth honorable rank among the foremost states in the Union. The penal and the reformatory, the eleemosynary and the educational institutions are monuments that speak more eloquently than human lips of the character and purpose of those who have lived and wrought during the seventy years of the state's history. The guiding hand, the sagacious brain, the patriotic intent of every governor from Mason to Warner can be traced in these visible evidences of the unfolding purpose and design of those who have builded better even than they knew. In this company of worthy men Aaron T. Bliss will ever hold an honorable place. He was born in the state of New York, the same year Michigan was admitted into the Union. He came from the middle class of society. His parents were neither rich nor poor, but there being a large family the future governor early learned the wholesome lessons of self-help and self-denial. The opening of the civil war found him, a young man of twenty-three, clerking in a village store in his native state. He was vigorous of body, active of mind, and ambitious of purpose. Having an inherited taste for the military, when the call came for volunteers he promptly responded. His career as a soldier, while wholly creditable, was not particularly conspicuous. Patriotism, soldierly intelligence, courage, and unflinching fidelity to duty brought him a captaincy of cavalry and an honorable position in the confidence and esteem of his comrades in war which he ever after retained in peace.

Like so many other soldiers of three or more years' service, the war left him with a commendable military record but

no money. He came to Michigan to reside almost immediately after the end of the great conflict. Henceforth the sphere of his activities was confined largely to his adopted state.

For many years his thought and energies were given almost wholly to business. As a man of affairs he ranked among the successful men of the state. He had capacity for large enterprises, and in health and when public duties did not interfere, he managed these with sagacity and success. No stain rests upon his financial integrity.

He was a zealous member of the Grand Army of the Republic and always a good friend of his comrades by whom he was elected a department commander for Michigan. To him the veterans of Michigan owe much for the existence of the state soldiers' home. He held the honorary position of colonel on the staff of the late Gov. Alger.

Deprived of an education, in the modern acceptance of the word, he was solicitous that others should have that which he did not possess. For many years before his death one or more young men or women were constantly in some institution of learning at his expense, and so reticent was he that only by accident or from knowledge gained through others was it known even to his closest friends. At least three institutions of collegiate grade were made the material beneficiaries of his generous liberality.

In his church relations he was modest and unassuming. The divine Father found recognition in his heart and home while the visible church of His son had in him a generous and constant supporter. On a multitude of subscription lists to church building funds in the Saginaw Valley, and not a few outside, will be found his name and opposite a liberal contribution. The poor, and the unfortunate had in him an

unfailing friend and a generous benefactor. These are illustrative of the character and spirit of the man in private life whose public service we this day commemorate.

He held many elective positions, each successive one indicating a growing confidence reposed in him by his fellow citizens. Alderman, supervisor and member of the public school board in his home city; state senator, and governor of the commonwealth and member of the national House of Representatives. These tell their own story. While his service in the national ligislature was covered by a single term, it resulted in permanent value to his district. The beautiful federal building in Saginaw and the noble institution for the education of Indian children located at Mount Pleasant, are visible evidences of his energy and his influence among his fellow congressmen.

As governor, his administration fell upon comparatively uneventful times. He was subjected to criticisms inseparable from the conflicting interests that focus in that funtionary, whoever he may be or whenever he may serve. He sought to give the state a business administration. Its many interests were studied and looked after with the same care and solicitude that successful men give to private enterprises. How well he succeeded is a matter of record. No scandals attach to his conduct of the state's most important affairs. No charges of public graft were alleged. His personal and official integrity were above suspicion. In the clarifying light of time his administration of the great office of governor stands forth free from serious blemishes. His life will be an inspiration to young men who, unaided and alone, have their way to make in the world. His career and accomplishments have already become a part of the imperishable treasures which its worthy public men bequeath to the state.

August F. Bruske, D. D.

President August F. Bruske, D. D., of Alma College

In the forest of Friedrichsruh, Germany, there is a solitary grave—above it a modest column of marble. The name upon it is that of Otto von Bismark. The inscription beneath "A servant of William I." Of course the Iron Chancellor had himself dictated the epitaph. In that solemn moment when he was face to face with time and eternity he forgot that he was the founder of an empire, the ruler of Kings, the arbiter of the destinies of Europe. He desired to be remembered only as the servant of a King.

Even so with almost literal accuracy we may repeat the essentials of the story. In Oakwood Cemetery, in a part of our commonwealth there is a grave, with modest stone above it. Upon it is the name of Aaron T. Bliss, and beneath it the fitting inscription would be "A servant of the people." I venture to say that in the final analysis this was the one ambition of his life—it is the one key to his character, the explanation of what he was and what he did.

1. This ambition made him a volunteer soldier at the first call to arms. In a little Methodist church at Bonkville, N. Y., there is a bronze tablet. At the top is the coat of arms of the State of New York. The inscription beneath it is "In this meeting house on Oct. 11th, 1861, those whose names are given below offered themselves to their country to save the Union." Immediately beneath are thirty-six names, among them that of Aaron T. Bliss. Let it be remembered that he enlisted "to save the Union." It was

not because he "sought the bubble reputation in the cannon's mouth," but because he wanted to serve his fellowmen by rescuing the Union from the hands of those who sought to destroy it. He began as a private soldier. Making himself conspicuously useful in the ranks he was soon promoted. For gallantry of service he rose to the office of a sergeant, and lieutenant and a captain. During those awful years of strife and death he was tested in every way that a man can be tried:—in victory and in defeat—in success and in disaster—in hunger and in thirst—in weary marches and long nights of vigil. In June, 1864, his command was taken prisoners. Fearful that he might escape, the enemy transferred him from one prison pen to another, from Andersonville to Macon—from Macon to Charleston—from Charleston to Columbia. In spite of these changes he succeeded in making his escape. For seventeen days and nights he wandered in forests and swamps till he reached the lines of Sherman's army in their famous and triumphant "March to the Sea."

When the strife was ended and the same flag floated once more over all the states, he returned to his home with the supreme satisfaction that he had faithfully served his country and had done his utmost to save it from disruption and disunion.

These four years of patriotic service he could never forget. No friends were so dear to him as the comrades of the war—no subject of conversation or public address so welcome to him as the story of the great civil war—no emblem was so dear to him as that of the "Stars and Stripes."

2. That Governor Bliss was one of the bravest of soldiers has never been questioned, even by the bitterest enemy. But in 1865 the last gun was fired, the sword was sheathed

and the volunteer soldier was face to face with a different task. He must now become a citizen of the great Republic and seek to snatch victory out of the keen and doubtful contest of business. Aaron T. Bliss the citizen came to Michigan and chose for his vocation that of a lumberman. In this he was both fortunate and wise. Fortunate, for there were hardly such opportunities of certain and large reward in any other sphere of activity. O, what fortunes lay beneath the green plumes of those glorious pine trees! What wealth in those almost unbroken forests stretching from Saginaw to Mackinaw and from Grand Rapids to the Straits! These fortunes, however, were not for all. They were for the wise, the prudent, the courageous, the persistent. Many entered into the contest for wealth, few were successful. Very conspicuous among the latter was Aaron T. Bliss, and great was his satisfaction in consequence. Not that he loved money for its own sake. In itself it had no more attraction for him than a heap of shining sand. He rejoiced in its possession as a means of doing good—as a tool with which he could render a larger service to his fellowmen. It made it possible for him to have the happiness of the philanthropist. Upon this point I can speak with the utmost confidence. For thirteen years I was not only a fellow citizen with him "of no mean city;" I was also his neighbor. We were not of the same church, possibly not of the same faith; but we were often together, where I had abundant opportunity to observe that Aaron T. Bliss was one of those very few men—O, how few!—who are absolutely pleased to have the opportunity of doing good.

Like Nathan the Wise in Lessing's famous drama, he was so ambitious in benevolence, that he would have every "Thank you, and God bless you" that was uttered in the

world directed toward himself. In this spirit he was most catholic and impartial. Of course it was most frequently directed toward the old soldiers. They came to him from every part of the State. They came to him with their wounds and their misfortunes, and they went away helped and comforted. Not less welcome was the stranger from a foreign land. It was enough that he was a fellowman in distress—in need of food, in need of a physician, in need of a friend—the heart, the hand, the purse of Governor Bliss were immediately open. And so in a still larger view, to beautify the city of his home, to multiply the happiness of its citizens—to carry forward the great enterprises of education and christianity—this was his constant endeavor. To such an amazing extent is this true that he gave almost beyond his ability. His own life habits were simple and economical that he might the more abundantly gratify his love for generosity. I venture to say that among the many public benefactors of our State, there has not yet arisen one who gave to the public good in proportion to his means such large and various gifts as Aaron T. Bliss. Do I need witnesses to corroborate this statement? I call upon the fountains and parks and public buildings of his home city—upon the many comrades in arms delivered from poverty and pain together with their widows and orphans—upon the churches and colleges established and endowed by his princely generosity, upon those pioneers of civilization, in the home land and in foreign lands, the missionaries, sent forth by the God speed and supported by the benefaction of the man we remember to-day—let them bear witness to the truth here spoken. All honor to the man surrounded by "such a cloud of witnesses."

As a successful lumberman who used his wealth in the spirit of philanthropy, Aaron T. Bliss is in the best of company.

He belongs to that honored group of men who did not take their fortunes, acquired in Michigan, to the East, where they were not needed; but who remained among us converting the pineries of the past into fertile farms and beautifying the towns and cities of our State with the monuments of their genius and generosity. Of this distinguished company are Russell Alger, of Detroit, Aaron T. Bliss, of Saginaw, Charles Hackley, of Muskegon, John R. Peters, of Manistee, and Ammi W. Wright, of Alma.

3. And now may I ask for the privilege of considering a very different phase of his character? We often say that the office should seek the man, not man the office. Of Governor Bliss it should be said that the office sought the man and the man sought the office. His fellow citizens delighted to do him honor. They made him an alderman for four years, a supervisor for ten years, a member of the school board for twelve years, the treasurer of the Michigan Soldiers' Home for five years, the Vice President of the National League of Republican Clubs, the Commander of the Grand Army of the Republic in Michigan, a member of the fifty-first Congress and twice Governor of this imperial State. These positions the people gladly gave him, but he also coveted them. They gave him the opportunity of serving his fellowmen. In this career of noble ambition he had one great disappointment. He thoroughly understood that the largest and highest places of usefulness were closed to him because of his lack of an early education. The self-made man without college training may still be much, but he may not do everything. The invitations to a seat in the United States Senate, to a place in the Cabinet of the President, to the position of our Nation's representative in the courts of kings abroad, —these with rarest exceptions are offered only to men of liberal

education in college or university. This was well understood by Governor Bliss. It was the sorrow of his life. Those four most precious years from 19 to 23 which he glorified by his heroism as a soldier—he nevertheless lost as a citizen. His school fellows entered college and gained a discipline of memory and reason which he ever after coveted, but never could obtain. What a sorrow it was to him that he could not make a speech, that he had neither the language nor the perspective, nor the self-command, nor the poise of the student and the scholar. He was the caged eagle beating his wings against the wires of his early limitations. What larger work would he not have undertaken! What greater service for his country and humanity if he had had a liberal education! The depth of his disappointment we will understand only as we measure the depth of his love for his fellowmen. He would serve them in the largest measure because he loved them with all his heart. I am sure that if the deepest expression of his thought were to be brought to us to-day, the message would be "Speak of me, remember me as one who loved his fellowmen." That love was catholic and universal. There was not a human face divine in which he did not recognize a brother. Lazarus at the gate and Dives at the banquet were alike objects of his love. The millionaire in his automobile, bowing his polite greetings as he passed, and the beggar at the street corner were equally welcome. The getting of a fortune could not alienate him from the poor, nor the losing of one make him envious toward the rich. It has fallen to the lot of few public men within my recollection to be more thoroughly misunderstood and more bitterly misrepresented by political foes than was Governor Bliss. In the midst of it all his spirit remained sweet and his confidence in the goodness of human nature unshaken.

Never have I heard that a word of bitterness escaped his lips in public or in private. He was first, last and all the time a living illustration of that finest stanza in that finest of English poems, the Ancient Mariner:—

"He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small
For the dear God who loveth us
He made and loveth all."

4. Friends and brethren:—Is there anything better that we can say of any man? We have not, as a State, especially distinguished ourselves for the brilliant men we have given to the public service. True it is that a Lewis Cass and a Zach Chandler deserved a place beside a Daniel Webster and a Roscoe Conkling; but these are the only two who have won the admiration of mankind for their brilliant intellectual achievements. Some deserve our gratitude because of their great courage and superb loyalty to duty. Such was Austin Blair who in the granite strength of his manhood looks down upon your city. Such was Hazen Pingree, whose colossal image stands giantlike in the midst of the city adorned by his genius. These men receive and deserve the reverence of every patriotic citizen of Michigan. But Russell A. Alger and Aaron T. Bliss appeal to our hearts as brothers. They loved and served us with every power of their being.

A few weeks ago I was in the Capitol of the nation. I had not seen it since the days of the civil war. Of course I found my way into the Senate chamber, into the visitors' gallery of the House of Representatives. I looked down upon those men in the midst of their toil—upon you, Sir (Mr. Washington Gardner). You appeared weary and burdened. I silently prayed that God might give you and

your associates the strength and wisdom to legislate and carry the burdens of eighty millions of people. I wandered into Statuary Hall, stood before the classic face of Senator Ingalls, thought of his finest sayings, his most brilliant repartees—they did not move me in my in my inmost soul. Not far away and yet quite alone, I saw the saddest face on which my eyes have ever rested. I had seen it once before—not in bronze but in the flesh. I saw it in 1865 in an upper chamber of the Capitol of Illinois. I saw it on the day of my greatest privilege in life, when I was permitted to march in the procession that carried to its last resting place the body of Abraham Lincoln. More than forty years had passed. Here was the same face in bronze which I saw then in death. The same feelings of love and sorrow thrilled me again. What is the mysterious power that draws all men to this face? It is the face of one who loved his fellowmen. These men we can not forget. The gratitude which they inspire may not always be world wide. It may extend only to a state or a community—depending on the wider or narrower circle of the man's influence. Whosoever loves and serves will be remembered. Among those who deserve this distinction we modestly place the name of Aaron T. Bliss.

Hon. Arthur Hill

Hon. Arthur Hill, of Saginaw

The last speaker reminds us that we miss "the touch of the vanished hand and the sound of the voice that is still." But fortunate is the man who makes friends who can speak of him so eloquently and justly after he has left us.

I acknowledge your kind favor, gentlemen of the Legislature, in permitting a friend and neighbor of Aaron T. Bliss for over a third of a century to state to this concourse of people what manner of man he was as looked upon by his home people, by those who knew him longest and loved him most.

When a man dies there is a final reckoning of his accounts with his fellowmen, not only in the probate court where financial matters only are considered, but in that court of broader jurisdiction, which makes a finding as to what his credits are in the line of integrity, unselfish service, true generosity and due consideration of the rights of others.

If such like acts and qualities predominate then he is morally solvent and leaves along with his property estate, a good name.

The old Bible saying that "a good name is better than great riches" was never more evidently true than now. Men with greater wealth than ancient Croesus are vainly trying to recover reputations lost in the ruthless pursuit of riches, which now pall upon them because they can not, with all they possess, buy back a good name and the respect and love that go with it.

Governor Bliss had a strong business ambition. He labored hard and long and to the end to gain and maintain a fortune. He was industrious, frugal, and persistent, yet never did he grind the faces of the poor, nor directly or indirectly take more than was duly his from any man.

You may say that this was only common honesty, but may I not mention it in these days of large affairs, when too often the right hand don't want to know what the left hand is doing.

Mark in this connection the sacrifices our friend made during his business life to public and private service.

His eloquent comrade has told us of the years spent on the field and in prison, during which time he saw other young men gathering wealth and with his strong business instinct this might have been to him galling. But he treated his army service always, not as a sacrifice rendered but a duty performed.

When, after the war he came to our State and entered upon his remarkable business career, crowded with vast and varied industrial enterprises, he became known as one of those rare business men who could always find time to serve the public with capacity and conscience in the humblest positions.

He was, as has been stated, for years alderman, supervisor, school trustee, member of boards and of the various committees which dealt with the public welfare, and that golden thread of unselfish service to country, to community, fraternity and to friends runs through and illumines the warp and woof of his whole life.

Aaron T. Bliss was a generous man. He gave not only of his substance and his sympathy but once fairly won it was his way to give the work of his own hand; he helped.

The poor he had always with him for they knew him as a friend.

A widow, who with her children he had for years befriended, was the first person permitted by the family to look upon him after death. She gazed down into his face tearfully, and as if he heard her, said "You'll be saved, you were so good to me and the children. I know you are not a Catholic, but my prayers and the prayers of the children that you have been like a father to, they will save you."

I have said that Aaron T. Bliss was a generous man. I shall now say in open frankness a few words about certain public bequests in his will that may not be paid in full.

When these bequests were made the property back of them was ample to provide for them. But as many of you know, Governor Bliss broke down in health during his gubernatorial administration.

The day of physical reckoning had come. The undermining years of army service; the strenuous labors of public and private life during the interval; the severe wound which shattered his hand received at a patrioitc demonstration, which never ceased to trouble him; a fall from a horse on the asphalt pavement at Washington, from which he was picked up bleeding and unconscious; the disease against which he vainly struggled and from which he finally died all combined to disable him, and in spite of all his efforts most heroic and most pathetic, to carry the burden of public administration and his large and extended private business, he was no longer equal to himself and to the work that lay before him. Lacking the touch of the master hand, certain large enterprises failed, and death finds his estate much dwindled.

But as to these bequests, they were written with a generous hand. All of which he died possessed stands dedicated to these noble ends except a modest provision for his family, and whether it be much or whether it be little, when a man

giveth all that he hath, that fills to the brim the measure of human generosity.

Aaron T. Bliss had great consideration for the rights and the feelings of others. His heart was most compassionate and to the man who was down he never turned his back, but gave his hand instead.

The one act for which Governor Bliss was severely criticized during his administration was the release from prison of a man who had sinned against the criminal laws of the state.

Years have now passed and what actual harm has come to the state through this act of the Governor?

Great hearted Lincoln saved many a condemned man from death when the very life of the Nation seemed to demand the punishment.

The Secretary of War might rage, the public might rail, but his gentle nature has its merciful sway.

Governor Bliss never could listen unmoved to the plea of any unfortunate nor to the cry of wife and child.

Who can now condemn any act of mercy during his administration when it is judged under the higher law, that law which makes us pray to our Father in heaven not for justice but always for mercy. When the fountain of mercy runs dry we will be indeed athirst.

This rare and generous quality of consideration for others made him many a friend, and won over to him many an enemy.

As his army comrade has said, he sought office but in the sharp political contests of which he had many, he fought not to kill, not to wound, but to win, and win like a gentleman.

He never from ambush hurled slur nor slander but fought in the open field according to the rules of honorable warfare. He had been a soldier in the war which ended when Grant and Lee shook hands at Appomattox, good fighters and good friends, and he never proved unworthy of that high example.

My mind now turns to that faithful wife and devoted brother who gave to him of their strength, their sympathy, their love to a degree that I have never seen surpassed. "It seems as if there was nothing left to live for since Cap. is gone," said Dr. Bliss to me a few days after his brother died. It was a sad prophecy, for already he has followed him and when he was buried, though the day was bleak, hundreds of the poor people gathered to pay their tribute of respect and love to their friend who was in heart and deed "The good Physician."

And his wife, with her fine intelligence and quick and active sympathy with misfortune in whatever form it comes, may she dwell yet many years among us secure in the affection of friends and solaced by the memories of a life nobly spent.

In Bliss Park, that beautiful ground which was her husband's last gift to his city, little children are now playing, the grass is growing green, the grand forest trees are budding and plant and vine are ready to burst into leaf and blossom. May she live to see there builded, a monument to the generous donor.

If this shall come to pass and on it shall be inscribed "Aaron T. Bliss, Governor of Michigan; Patriot, Philanthropist, Friend of the People," all who knew their lives will remember that her heart warmed always his heart, that her hand upheld always his hand and helped him to an honored name.

Hon. Charles Smith

Hon. Charles Smith, of Hubbell

An English statesman once said to his auditors when the subject of their colonies was under discussion that they might sneer as much as they liked at the demands of the Americans, but the time would come when would be heard as the proudest explanation of man, "I am an American." That prediction has come true. In a similar train of thought it is now said of such a man as Governor Bliss that he was a true American. A man, energetic, and determined to forge ahead by just means while according to every other man equal and exact justice and consideration.

Governor Bliss as a young man had just made a small beginning in commercial life when the guns of Sumpter heralded through the land the unwelcome news that our matchless government and free institutions had been assailed.

Commercialism and all the dreams of personal wealth and independence were cast aside and that patriotic fervor that was a chief characteristic to the day of his demise speedily enrolled his name among those noble warriors who bared their breasts for the defence of old Glory, and won for themselves the plaudits of their fellow citizens, the admiration of the women of our land and a glorious immortality.

Returning to commercial pursuits, by industry and energy he succeeded no less than in the line of battle. In the prosecution of business pursuits, the management of men, or the conduct of civil offices from supervisor to congressman, he always achieved a high standing, amassed a comfortable

fortune, and held a notable rank among the best citizens of the time. He constantly strove to lead an ideal life. He was indeed one whose manhood and generosity will always be remembered with approval and gratitude by people in general, especially those of his own city, which will for all time be better and more beautiful because of his bequests and the noble example of his upright manhood.

My personal acquaintance with Governor Bliss was during the four years that he occupied the executive chair of our state. He was always approachable and sympathetic but was subservient to one's requests only when comporting with his own high sense of justice and the public welfare. He never, I believe, during his two terms acquiesced in anything or any measure not approved by his innermost conscience.

The only sure bulwark of the state and nation is when our policies are shaped and our laws executed by men of great capacity who are guided by their own supreme ideals.

While our citizens generally follow their own best thoughts, as did he, swerving not from the path of rectitude as marked out by his life work, no hindrance will come to the onward march of the cherished institutions of our beloved state or the true welfare of the people, and the splendid manhood American citizenship will ever inscribe prominently on their scroles of honor the name and worth of Governor Bliss.

Hon. Michael F. Moriarty

Hon. Michael F. Moriarty, of Crystal Falls

PRESIDENT PRO TEM. OF THE SENATE

This day having been fixed by the legislature of Michigan, to honor the memory of our late governor, the honorable Aaron T. Bliss, who died not long ago in the city of Milwaukee, where he had gone in search of health, it may not be improper for me to detain you just a little longer to refer to a few things he did while he was governor of our state. Much has been said of his military and private life, and therefore, I shall speak only of his official and public career. The day he was nominated for governor by the Republicans of Michigan in the city of Grand Rapids, my soul was stirred by the music of fife and drum. I looked down the streets of that city and saw a vast army of gray-haired veterans marching to the step of martial music. At the head of that regiment of old soldiers, the color bearer proudly carried our flag and the stars and stripes was floating in the summer breeze.

Those veterans, crippled with wounds and scarred with age were trying to march with the same youthful vigor as they used to do, when they were fighting for the black man's freedom. All along the line as far as I could see, those boys of '61 carried in their hands the banner of our dead governor, upon which was printed, "Vote for Aaron T. Bliss." I thought of the love and loyalty of those old heroes, and of the man for whom they were shouting, and it seemed to me that if he could win the love and confidence of his army comrades and hold it for nearly forty years, he was indeed fit to be governor of Michigan. When I came to

the Senate in 1903, I learned to love him for the acts of charity and mercy that he performed. He was always doing something to make others happy, and there are many homes in Michigan which he found in tears that he filled with joy. With his own hands he fed the poor, and unsolicited he freely gave large sums to charitable institutions.

When he was elected to Congress of these United States, he secured an appropriation to build a home for the education of the Indians of this state at Mt. Pleasant. He did not think it was really necessary for an Indian to die in order to be good, but he believed that if they were educated they would be good until they died. That he was right, has been amply demonstrated. His heart bled at the sight of a blind man groping his way along the street, and he thought of a plan to make the lives of these unfortunates less difficult to bear. If he could only induce the legislature to appropriate enough money to build them a home, in some pleasant city, where they could live and do something to help maintain themselves instead of groping their way through the world in total darkness asking alms, his joy would be complete. With this object in view, he prepared a bill providing for an institution for the adult blind, where the state and the blind man could work together in unison for his maintenance. Calling me into his office one day he told me of his plans, with his eyes brimful of tears and asked me if I would father the bill. To accomplish this end he worked until the close of the session and finally secured an appropriation for that purpose. Today in the city of Saginaw peacefully sleeps our late governor, free from public and private cares, and standing there is a magnificent institution for all of the adult blind of our beloved state, as an evidence of his last public work and a splendid monument for his grave.

He was as gentle as a woman and his heart was as soft and kind, but when he faced a public or private duty he performed it with the courage of a giant. He never appointed a man to an office who did not perform the duties thus imposed faithfully and well. It is true he was criticized and libelled by the press, slandered and abused by those whom he refused to give offices, whenever he granted a parole or pardon to one whom he found worthy of executive clemency, yet standing here this afternoon, I challenge the world to point to a single spot or place where graft or scandal was ever suspected in any of the departments of state during his terms of office. I want to say, Mr. President, that out there in the dark somewhere is the end of life's journey for every living man, and if I were governor of Michigan I would rather tumble headlong into the arms of death with a goodly number of paroles and pardons charged to me as governor of a state, than to appear before my creator without any to my credit. I can think of no sadder beginning of eternal life, Mr. President, than to stand before the judgment throne of Almighty God pleading for the salvation of my soul with the tears of a gray haired mother, the heartaches of a devoted wife and the sobs of little children testifying to my heart of marble here on earth.

Governor Bliss may have had his faults but they are buried one hundred thousand miles beneath the acts of charity and mercy performed by him while he was governor of our state. His memory may have passed out of the hearts and minds of those to whom I have alluded, but in the homes he made happy with the laughter of little children and in the hearts of those to whom he restored to liberty he will not be forgotten. And today and every day while they live, they will breathe forth a prayer for the salvation of his soul.

Life of Aaron T. Bliss

Biographical Sketch of the Life of Aaron T. Bliss

By Major Herbert E. Johnson, Secretary to the Governor for the Years 1901-2-3-4

Aaron T. Bliss, governor of Michigan for the years 1901-2-3-4, was a man of affairs, accustomed to the solving of knotty problems, and his growth from boyhood years to those of maturity was sturdily rooted in the hard soil of experience. Faithful in service he became high in honors, and praise stands silent in the dignity of his simple life from farmer boy to governor.

Like many another American his life is an incentive to ambitious effort and a spur to accomplishment for the reason that he did things. His indomitable will would not be withstood and he caught and held opportunity without waiting for it to call upon him. He was elemental in character and an analysis reveals a reverence for the moralities of life so strong as to be an abiding conviction that could not be departed from. He had the keenest respect for the sanctity of a promise and his loyalty to friends was proverbial. During the long years of life that were his the taint of scandal was not upon him, and he stood an honest man in the sight of his fellowmen. He was quick to forgive and to forget, seemed almost incapable of harboring a grudge and even at those times in his political life when he was most bitterly assailed was charitable to his enemies, ascribing to them more worthy motives than the petty ones by which often they were governed.

As a citizen, Mr. Bliss was distinguished for those qualities

which mark the men most prominent in the upbuilding of the typical American community, being interested in affairs and taking an active part in all matters having to do with the common good. His was a considerable part in promoting the growth of the city of Saginaw, where he made his home, in multiplying its industries and adding to its beauties and its pleasures. Large as were his activities he was never too busy to be a good neighbor and friend and many there are who have had occasion to be grateful because of his kindly and generous heart. With his wife he dispensed an unstinted hospitality and their home was always a pleasant place to visit. Though children of their own did not come to them, they gave to the children of relatives the same tender care they would have given to their own and were never so happy as when the voices of childhood were heard about them. Whenever he saw a group of children or young people having a good time he was never satisfied until he had in some way contributed to their enjoyment.

As governor and as lawmaker, Mr. Bliss was faithful in the discharge of the duties resting upon him and he had a high regard for the solemnity of his oath of office. During the trying days of his governorship, more than once when important and vexatious matters were being pressed upon him for a decision did he retire to his private room and upon bended knees ask Divine Providence for assistance and guidance. Such a man may make mistakes but his rectitude can never be assailed successfully nor his motives be impugned. His administration of the high office of governor of Michigan was without scandal among high or low and was marked by a great degree of economy and efficiency. His chief magistracy embraced four years of unbounded prosperity for Michigan, years when history was not made by lightning flashes but

in contentment and the ingathering of the stores of plenty, a period of relief from strain and stress, long days when the state waxed strong and prosperity abode in her homes. A picture not so lurid as the blazing lights of war and contention, but far more satisfying. He left state affairs in better condition than he found them, and the general circumstances of his gubernatorial incumbency will give him high place among the names of those who have served the state well. He was a peace governor and gave to every interest of the commonwealth jealous care and attention, always mindful of the burdens of taxation and anxious that efficiency and economy should go hand in hand in the conduct of the affairs of state.

The history of the Bliss family is a long and honorable one, enriched with Puritan traditions and brave service for God and country on both sides of the Atlantic. It is written that the founder of the family came to England with William the Conqueror, receiving signal honors at the hands of the new king, and it is entirely in keeping with the temper of this sturdy English ancestor that when the persecutions of the Puritans became so fierce Thomas Bliss, the founder of the American branch, "desiring to serve God according to the dictates of his conscience, left the country of his birth and came to the new world," settling at Hartford, in 1635. His descendants followed the movement of population westward and so it came about that in the year 1837, two hundred years later, there was born on the 22nd of May a seventh child in the family of Lyman Bliss who was a Madison county farmer in the state of New York, a child who was destined to become one of the governors of the state of Michigan which was then the youngest member of the federal union. Upon the lad were bestowed the family names

of Aaron and Thomas, and he grew to manhood sharing the blessings and the sorrows of six brothers and two sisters. In those days the educational advantages of western New York were not what they are today, schoolhouses being few and far between, and the children of this large family were more than ordinarily handicapped in the task of obtaining an education. The little red schoolhouse on a neighboring hill was at once grammar school and university, and there they qualified for a place among the thousands from other similar schools constituting the mightiest force that ever wrought for the progress of a nation.

The ambitions of a lad were impatient to become those of a man, and life upon the farm for Aaron T. Bliss came to an end even before his boyhood had passed. As a boy he had dreamed of the large opportunities offered by the then almost unknown country of the middle west, but for years it was to be only a dream. At 17 years his first chance for participation in the outside life came when he was offered a place as boy of all work in a grocery store in the little village of Morrisville nearby. It is an interesting story, the man coming to the field where Father Bliss and the boys were hoeing corn and asking for the bright-eyed lad who had attracted his attention while on errands to the store. The father objected, said he did not like to spare his son, but the boy said "You know you have promised," and the father was never known to break his word. And so the future governor went barefooted from the field to the house to wash and dress and kiss his mother good-bye for he was always an affectionate boy and very fond of his mother. As is the boy, so is the man, and it is noted that years afterwards when he had been nominated for governor and was led before the convention to acknowledge the honor, his first act was to kiss his wife.

He remained in Morrisville nearly two years, working in the grocery store at $3.00 a week the later part of the time and when he left Morrisville for Bouckville, a village some nine miles away, he had accumulated the modest sum of $75.00. In his new home he engaged as clerk in the drygoods and grocery store of J. Burhans & Son, as a sort of protege of the uncle for whom he was named, and who had an interest in the store, which later was known by the name of Burhans & Bliss. He was so employed when the civil war broke out and the president called for troops. His name was first upon the muster rolls of the Peterman Guards which he was largely interested in organizing, and which became a part of Company D of the Tenth New York Cavalry. The circumstance of his muster-in is evidenced by a bronze tablet which many years after he caused to be erected in the little Methodist church in Bouckville and whereon it is recorded:

> "In this meeting house the following 24 members of Company D, Tenth New York Volunteer Cavalry, were sworn into the service of the United States October 11th, 1861, for the defense of the Union."

He aided in recruiting the company to its full strength and when it left Elmira for the front he wore upon his shoulders the straps of a first lieutenant having arisen from a sergeancy. A year later Governor Seymour of New York had commissioned him captain for gallant conduct upon the field of battle. The Tenth New York served in the Army of the Potomac, and was under Sheridan in the closing battles of the war. It took part altogether in 108 engagements, and lost, in killed and wounded more than 25 per cent of its men, and on the famous battlefield of Gettysburg its monument occupies a commanding position. Active service came to

an end for Captain Bliss at the forks of a dusty country road in Virginia, known as Reams' Station. Here Wilson's troopers on one of their famous raids were brought to bay and so closely were they hemmed in that it became a question of the sacrifice of the few that the escape of the many might be made. A call for volunteers brought Captain Bliss and 200 volunteers to the front and so fiercely did they defend the rear of the escaping command that when finally the confederates broke through their hastily constructed entrenchments only a few were left to become prisoners of war. Wounded with a spent ball, Captain Bliss was dragged away to southern prisons, but he had the satisfaction of knowing the fight had not been in vain and that Wilson and his men had escaped. While on the way to Andersonville prison with five others he broke though the floor of the box car in which he was being transferred, and made his way to the woods. Bloodhounds were put on their trail and it became a case of each man for himself. Double twist and turn as he would, the fleeing soldier could not shake the hounds off, and it was not long before Captain Bliss was compelled to take refuge in a tree from which men with muskets dragged him down. Successively he was imprisoned in Salisbury, North Carolina, Andersonville and Macon, Georgia, and Charleston and Columbia, South Carolina.

He was in prison at the time of the re-election of Abraham Lincoln, and participating in the prisoners' ballot he disregarded the jailer's warning that the election of Lincoln meant a continuation of the war, no exchange of prisoners, and a grave on the hillside for those within the rebel power. And as he cast the black bean, which was the Lincoln ballot, the valient soul within him made light of threats and he resolved on a bold strike for freedom. After several fruitless

attempts he made his escape from Columbia prison, November 29, 1864, and for 18 weary days and nights stumbled through the perils that beset him until on the morning of December 16, nearly starved, ragged and footsore, he entered Sherman's lines near Savannah. Being without means of identification, he was taken before General Kilpatrick, whose rough welcome at once dispelled all thoughts that he might be a spy. From the headquarters of General Sherman he went to rejoin his regiment which was at Petersburg, but his health had been so undermined that he was compelled to resign from the service in February, 1865.

Years later when this same rugged prisoner of war had become governor of Michigan, accompanied by a staff many of whom had seen service in the war of the rebellion, by committees of the house and senate, he visited once more the old prison stockade at Andersonville, and dedicated the monument which the great Peninsular state had caused to be erected in memory of her gallant sons who had died there. I know of nothing more touching than these words from the speech he made that day:

> "It seems as but yesterday that the stockade reared its head about these grounds and the dead line warned 'thus far and no farther.' I can see the dense masses of the prisoners and entering into their daily life, know as only experience can know, the life of a prisoner of war. It is one thing to serve as a soldier in the field, to endure the privations of camp and march, to face the madness of battle and endure its carnage; it is another thing to be herded behind walls whose never-sleeping eyes are loaded muskets, to exist beneath skies that are pitiless, dropping alternately scorching heat and the chill

of rain, and to suffer day by day, to see death strike right and left, and to realize that one is helpless to do aught but endure it all as best one can; while outside the walls marches are made, battles are fought, and deeds are done for home and flag."

The close of the war brought the day of which Captain Bliss had dreamed when a boy, when he might betake himself to the great west. The autumn of 1865 saw him in the Saginaw valley at the beginning of his successful career as a lumberman, penniless but brave in spirit. He went into the woods and the foreman who gave him work started him driving horses. Often in the winter mornings he saw the snow on his blanket where it had drifted in through the cracks in the shanty which sheltered him and his fellows. Almost from those first days in Saginaw there walked with him the brave little woman known and loved the length and breadth of the state, she, who was Allaseba M. Phelps, daughter of Ambrose Phelps, of Solsville, Madison county, N. Y., and whom he married, March 31, 1868. Those first days were very humble days indeed, the wife superintending the affairs of the mill boarding house while the husband was logging contractor, and later for himself, slowly but surely, laid the foundations of the fortune which was to bless not only those to whom its stewardship was given but many others. And as has been said by one who knew the wife well: "She was as tactful and helpful in those days as she was when the social duties of the wife of governor of Michigan devolved upon her. No success came to Governor Bliss to which Mrs. Bliss did not contribute, and no one appreciated it or was more ready to acknowledge it than was the governor."

Captain Bliss was not one to long remain in the ranks, and

in the fall of 1866 formed a partnership with his next oldest brother, Dr. L. W. Bliss and Dr. J. H. Jerome, and lumbered a tract on the Tobacco river under the name of A. T. Bliss & Co. For many years the firm of A. T. Bliss & Brother was one of the large employers of the Saginaw valley, and its name a familiar one to all those who sought wealth in the forests of Michigan. A history of its operations would bring into recital the names of most of the men that the Saginaw valley has made known to the lumber world and with whom relations of amity were sustained to the very end. In the early '80's, Captain Bliss added banking to the list of his activities, being one of the organizers of the Citizens National Bank, of which he was president until it was merged in the Bank of Saginaw. He was one of the stockholders and directors of the Commercial National Bank and of the Saginaw County Savings Bank, of which institution he was president at the time he was elected governor. He was largely interested in many lines of business, but lumbering and banking were the principal enterprises to which he gave personal attention except the one favorite pursuit of farming. Born the son of a farmer, he never lost his love for the soil, and with his usual thrift made the farm pay, having under cultivation for years something like a thousand acres.

With the foundations of his fortune securely laid, known as a keen business man, and backed by a splendid record as a soldier, Captain Bliss was peculiarly available for political honors, and the ladder of preferment once placed at his feet he climbed it round by round until the highest station in the state was his. It was when business life was making most demands upon him that his fellow citizens of Saginaw first called him into service, in turn electing him alderman, supervisor, and member of the board of education. As a memorial

of his later services one of the school buildings of Saginaw bears his name.

In 1882 he represented the 25th senatorial district (Saginaw county) in the state Legislature, in 1885 he was appointed aide on the staff of Governor Alger with the rank of colonel, and twelve years later came to him one of the honors which he esteemed the most, his election as Commander of the Department of Michigan, Grand Army of the Republic. In the meantime he had been serving as a member of the board of managers of the Michigan Soldiers' Home, and this was his public service when he entered the Fifty-first Congress as representative from the eighth congressional district. The monuments of his service in the congress which concern Michigan most are the splendid federal building at Saginaw and the great Indian school at Mount Pleasant, though in the book of the hereafter it may be that those will not compare with the grateful feelings which welled up from the hearts of the many hundreds of civil war veterans whom he aided in obtaining their rights under the pension laws of the United States or when those laws were inadequate, secured the enactment of special pension laws.

Defeated for reelection in the great Democratic landslide of 1890, Colonel Bliss once more immersed himself in business, and in 1892 became a candidate for the Republican nomination for governor. Though defeated at first, the movement in support of his candidacy grew steadily until, in June, 1900 the famous Auditorium at Grand Rapids became the scene of his triumph when the fiercest fought nomination campaign in the history of the Republican party of the state of Michigan culminated in the Grand Rapids convention of that year. There were two other leading candidates for the nomination, the Hon. D. M. Ferry of Detroit, and the

Hon. J. S. Stearns of Ludington, then secretary of state, and besides these there were the Hon. Chase S. Osborn of Sault Ste. Marie, the Hon. James O'Donnell of Jackson, and the Hon. Milo D. Campbell of Coldwater. The shifting and the sifting of the first day and the exciting seventeenth ballot of the second day eliminated all the other candidates except O'Donnell, who came face to face with Bliss in the last great trial of strength, the fighting forces of the convention having arrayed themselves under their banners. The eighteenth ballot was decisive and though another was required it had not progressed far before it became the typical political landslide. Amid scenes of greatest enthusiasm the nomination of Colonel Bliss was declared, and committees were sent to escort the candidates, victor and vanquished, before the convention.

William C. Maybury, mayor of Detroit, was the Democratic candidate for the gubernatorial office and the national and state campaigns during their course brought to Michigan the rough riding governor of New York, the Republican vice presidential candidate, Theodore Roosevelt. Enthusiasm was in the air, the triple button "McKinley, Roosevelt and Bliss" was in overwhelming demand and when November came the national and state tickets had swept Michigan by one of the greatest pluralities in its history. And so the farmer boy of New York became governor of the peninsular state.

An imposing civic and military display accompanied the governor-elect to Lansing where on New Year's Day, 1901, he took the oath of office as successor to Governor Hazen S. Pingree. He was re-elected in 1902, and served the state four years as chief executive. As has been said, these were years of peace and prosperity and the problems of this

excutive were more those of supervision than of construction. Bringing to the office of governor a superbly trained business mind, Governor Bliss took up the discharge of the manifold duties imposed upon him with an almost painful minuteness of attention, and as the head of a large business pays attention to and gives heed to the advice of the heads of department so did the governor listen with respect to the recommendations of the various great officers of state and aid them with all the powers vested in the office he held.

As long as his health permitted, Governor Bliss gave personal attention to every matter of importance that reached the executive offices and many of his subordinates have strict recollection of the exactness of his memory with regard to the execution of each and every order made by him. Although appreciating the honor of his high position he had no particular pride of office in the sense that term is many times used and never felt that it demeaned him in the least to wait personally upon the most humble of his callers. It seemed many times to those who knew him most intimately as governor that memories of his own early days were with him, keeping his heart tender for those who had no one to make a fight for them or obtain audience when the rich and powerful of the state were pressing their demands. More than once the governor interfered personally and gave ear to some shabbily dressed man or woman when by right of priority of call others who exhibited every evidence of prosperity were entitled to be heard under the American law of "first come, first served." I remember well one day during the time the Forty-second Legislature was in session. Matters were at fever heat and many of the biggest men in the state were besieging Lansing with the executive offices as the focal point. A shy, shrinking woman, poorly dressed, her face and

form bearing evidence of coming trial, pressed her way into the governor's offices, half fearfully and was vainly trying to get the attention of the colored guard at the inner door when suddenly that door opened and the governor hurried into the public office after some information. His keen eyes searched the crowd instinctively and in an instant had lighted upon the worried face of the woman. Stepping to her side he asked what he could do for her and heard her story of suffering and sorrow. Her husband who had committed some comparatively trifling offense was undergoing imprisonment in the Detroit House of Correction. Calling the secretary of the Board of Pardons the governor was shortly put in possession of all the information he needed to convince him that the woman told the truth and ere the day was done sent her away happy over the release of her husband. Some six months later the wife, husband and baby came to the governor and the parents thanked him most heartily for his clemency. The governor took the babe, crowing contentedly, into his arms and said, "This happy little one and a saved father more than repays me. Michigan cannot have too many happy homes."

His tender heart caused him more real grief than all the other troubles that beset him during the course of his administration. A woman whose plea was not as rightly founded as was that of the one he made so happy obtained audience one day. The Board of Pardons had just refused clemency in the case of her husband and she was appealing to the governor. He heard her most patiently and as the tears coursed down her cheeks the governor's eyes melted as his own tears came in sympathy. When finally he had to tell the sorrowing supplicant that her prayer must be denied I doubt not that he was even more affected than was the woman who saw her chance for happiness disappear forever.

Governor Bliss could be very stern and decided when he had resolved upon a course of action. Opposition only whetted his spirit and neither threats nor display of force sufficed to alter his plans. This is a far different picture of the man than his enemies loved to present to the public, but it correctly represents him as the other did not. Had it been otherwise he would sometimes have faltered under the weight of the terrific and undeserved newspaper campaign waged against him. Not once did he open mouth to reply. He never sought to conciliate his enemies in spite of the fact that at times concessions would have brought assistance and might have afforded relief. A square administration was his goal and he had no other purpose in view. Early in his administration he alienated or at least made luke warm in his support certain of the political leaders of the upper peninsula because he had decided not to appoint the man whom they had agreed to support for member of the State Tax Commission, and in this ran counter to the advice of men who were very close to him and upon whom he leaned as his strongest support. So tremendous was the pressure and so alluring the political advantage to be secured that the wonder is he did not grasp at what other men have grasped before. But he had counted the consequences and made the appointment in his own way. Instances could be multiplied, varying in character and circumstance but all tending in support of the assertion that had he been merely self-seeking he might have made for himself much easier times.

Governor Bliss has been absent from the field of action so brief a time and the period since his administration of state affairs terminated has been so short that from the historical point of view the relative importance of things accomplished may not yet be determinable, but it is certain that those four

years contributed materially to the welfare of the people of Michigan. Together with the attorney general he initiated the great legal fight to compel the railroad corporations of the state to pay at the same rate of taxation as that paid by tho other property of the commonwealth and so well laid were the plans, so able the men selected, that the fruits of this contest fought to conclusion under their successors in office were most imposing. He gave aid and assistance in the campaign for improving the system of making party nominations, in speeches, in messages to the legislature and in official sanction of the local primary election measures. He was pronounced in his opposition to local corporation measures under the guise of general laws, and on more than one occasion this ounce of prevention was of more importance than the traditional pound of cure. He warned again and again against the evil of unnecessary legislation, and never lost an opportunity to fight the practice of enacting special laws for localities or to hammer the custom of giving immediate effect to laws regardless of the existence of a constitutional emergency.

The blind people of Michigan will never forget the governor because to him they owe the creation of the Employment Institution for the Blind, to the organization of which he gave personal attention and in its service enlisted the talents and energies of his close personal friends. He took a deep interest in the institutional works of the state and on more than one occasion commended the members of the various boards of control, who serve practically without compensation, for their patriotic devotion to the interests committed to their charge.

Under his administration came the constitutional changes and legislative enactments that almost revolutionized the

attitude of the state toward its criminal elements through the creation of the law of probation and the indeterminate sentence method of punishment, the basic principle of which is a helping hand for the man or woman who tries honestly to reform. These measures appealed strongly to the governor and every means he could employ legitimately were used to bring about their accomplishment, and his satisfaction was pronounced when the enrolled acts were brought to him for his approval. He used these laws as often as it came within his power, for seemingly it was the bent of his nature to be extending a helping hand to the unfortunate and the erring. If conditions and circumstances would admit opening prison doors he believed that a man who had offended against the law but who had completely repented of his misdoing would be the better off and society more truly served through this man maintaining himself honestly and those dependent upon him, than to harden and embitter through punishment that was retaliation and nothing else. And it was a great satisfaction to him to know that less than one in ten who were released by him under the laws of parole were required to be returned to prison for infraction of the conditions of their release. No work of the state along the line of the prevention of crime appealed to him any more than the Industrial School for Boys at Lansing and the School for Girls at Adrian. He visited these institutions frequently, and many times the boys and the girls in those schools have had occasion to be grateful to him for gifts that enabled them to see life from new points of view.

Governor Bliss had a clear vision of the economics of state affairs, and many of his views have been left of record in his state papers. He spoke, wrote, and gave personal assistance towards the cause of reforestation and was one of the pioneers

in the cause of good roads. He took no mean part in the advancement of the agricultural and dairy interests of Michigan, and gave material support towards the establishment of a great state fair.

At the age when most men obtain an education, Governor Bliss was in the armed service of his country and those years once passed, the opportunity in which every boy who will can share today, was not his again, and out of his loss was born a great desire to help in the education of others. This desire became a passion, and because of it and practical application to their lives scores of well educated men and women in this state today bear reverent witness of the good this man did. Great educational institutions, their work quickened and strengthened because of his generosity, stand as monuments that more than mutely mark the pathway along which he passed, and it can be said of him truly that wherever he rested, blessings grew. He had the creative spirit and under its inspiration there sprang into existence the institution at Mt. Pleasant for the education of the Indian boys and girls and the good it has accomplished will mark for all time his congressional service. Through his membership in the Michigan legislature and subsequent appointment to the board to organize and locate the Michigan Soldiers' Home, much is due for that great pile of buildings at Grand Rapids wherein are sheltered the remnants of those battalions that once were the very life blood of the nation. At Saginaw, fronting the buildings of the Employment Institution for the Blind are the grounds of the splendid recreation park which he gave to the boys and girls of the city wherein they might make merry for all time to come, and again in Saginaw and in the little town of Peterboro, New York, are monuments of stone and iron erected by him in memory of the comrades with whom he served during the civil war.

The first interruption of the governor's activities came near the close of his first term, and when he was residing in Lansing. Lagrippe struck him a deadly blow and for days his life fairly trembled in the balance but his sturdy constitution apparently won for him then as it had on other occasions as far as could be seen. The ensuing campaign and the challenge to political combat roused the old fighter as nothing else could have done, and he went from a sick bed to the thickest of one of the hottest contests of his career. He did not falter once and when the Detroit convention had resulted in a decisive victory, he appeared before the convention and pledged his best efforts for the common welfare, little thinking that he was to be a passive spectator during most of the campaign. The weakened heart was not equal to the demands made upon it, and held the governor in his home. He was not a well man during the greater portion of his second term, but so firmly did he conceal his condition that only a very few realized the difficulties under which he labored, and I verily believe that sometimes he deceived even himself as to his health. He was just as devoted to duty, as considerate and kindly as ever, and not until the last task was completed did he give way in the stern struggle. After he was once more established in his home in Saginaw and surrounded by the scenes to which he had been accustomed, he appeared to recover his strength, and it was there, on the occasion of his 68th birthday anniversary that occurred what was one of the most pleasant experiences of his life, the presentation to him of a silver loving cup by the members of his military staff during his term as governor. The men who assembled in his home that evening to testify their love and admiration, little dreamed that for him the close of life was so near. The first summons came at Flint,

August 31, 1905, when en route to the national encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic at Denver, he was stricken with apoplexy. A special train carried him back to Saginaw where his devoted brother, Dr. L. W. Bliss, began his tireless vigil and the unequal contest with the "reaper whose name is Death." At times the governor was well enough to attend to business matters that required special consideration, and at others the failing tide of life sank so low that even the tireless brother-physician abandoned hope. An iron will bore up the governor and he was sustained by the determination that had never yet failed. Trips were made to various parts of the country in a vain effort to find relief from the ever present danger but the end came finally at the Sacred Heart Sanitarium in Milwaukee, Sunday, September 16, 1906.

Then came the day of sorrow. The love and esteem in which Governor Bliss was held turned the thoughts of the commonwealth to the home in Saginaw where, under the flag he loved so well he lay on a couch sleeping the last dreamless sleep. The soldiery of the state waited at the portal of that home the while ministers of God brought the last consolations of religion to the family that were to give up their loved one. The casket was borne to the stately hall of the Masonic Temple, where it was banked with flowers and wrapped in the folds of Old Glory. Soldiers kept watch o'er the silent form while the people of Saginaw, yes, the people of Michigan, by thousands took one last look upon the countenance of him who more than anything else during life had desired the love of mankind, and had not wearied in well doing. Side by side with the faltering comrades of the civil war were the chief men of the state, governor and commoner; there were widows and little children who had known of the

tenderness of him who lay there, and so through the long hours of the day walked the good deeds of the man who was gone and which had risen up to call him blessed.

Words of eulogy from men who had known him many years of his life, glad words of comfort and cheer, song and prayer, the uniforms of Templar and soldier, the tense faces of the multitude that waited in the streets, were but the beginning of the panorama that rolled to the very gates of Forest Lawn Cemetery, where opened the doors of the granite walled chamber of sleep. And when he was lain therein, and the smoke of three volleys had floated over him, and taps had spoken to him the solemn words of the soldier's farewell, the last rays of the sinking sun floated through the western clouds and rested in benediction above his resting place.

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